

OPIOID TREATMENT



Nick Waterhouse and girlfriend Meagan Dayton say their baby daughter Brooklynn is the reason for kicking their opioid habit. Watch a video at juneauempire.com of Nick and Meagan talking about Rainforest Recovery Center's new Medication Assisted Treatment and how it has helped them.

New medication makes opioid addiction treatment easier for some

By ALEX MCCARTHY
JUNEAU EMPIRE

Their days aren't as exciting as they used to be, and that's exactly how they want it.

Finishing a morning shift as a barista/bartender at the Juneau International Airport,

Nick Waterhouse got home a little after noon on Wednesday. His girlfriend Meagan Dayton was there, spending time with their baby daughter Brooklynn.

Their schedule was open, as it usually is these days. Instead of spending their mornings promising each other

that this would finally be the day that they'd get sober, now they spend their mornings either at work or staying with Brooklynn. Instead of getting high, now they like to take walks along the Dredge Lake Trail or the Back Loop Trail by the airport.

Sometimes Meagan

makes dinner, like fried or baked chicken. Sometimes they go bowling.

"It's great," Waterhouse said of their new life. "I love it. But it's not exciting. That's for damn sure. It's not as exciting as it was before."

'It's Juneau'

Waterhouse started

smoking pot at a fairly young age before moving on to harder drugs around the time he was 18. Dayton began with Oxycontin before moving on to heroin about six years ago.

Both of them have spent the vast majority

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PFD veto stands

Supreme Court agrees that Gov. Walker's 2016 veto of half the Dividend was legal

By JAMES BROOKS
JUNEAU EMPIRE

The Alaska Supreme Court has upheld Gov. Bill Walker's veto of a portion of the 2016 Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend.

In a decision issued Friday, the court said, "We conclude that Governor Walker validly exercised his constitutional veto authority when reducing the transfer amount from the earnings reserve to the dividend fund."

Sen. Bill Wielechowski, D-Anchorage, in conjunction with former legislators Rick Halford and Clem Tillion, had sued the state to overturn Walker's veto of half the 2016 dividend. Walker's action, inspired by the inaction of the Alaska Legislature last year, reduced the dividend from more than \$2,000 to \$1,022.

Friday's decision is a clear victory for the state, which had argued for the legality of the veto.

"I'm very disappointed," Wielechowski said by phone on Friday morning. "With this decision, the governor can ignore mandatory, statutory language that requires dividend payments. ... The Legislature can do the

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Marisol Ortiz Torres holds her new national flag during a Naturalization Ceremony at the Robert Booechever Federal Courthouse in Juneau on Friday.



MICHAEL PENN | JUNEAU EMPIRE

New citizens pledge their allegiance

More than 30 immigrants take oath during naturalization ceremony

By LIZ KELLAR
JUNEAU EMPIRE

Hakan Sebcioglu was a young boy living on the coast of Turkey when his uncle,

who was working in Germany, sent him a postcard.

The postcard didn't feature a German scene, however. It was

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DEADLINES

Election Day is quickly approaching, which means voter registration deadlines are right around the corner. Important dates, via the City and Borough of Juneau Clerks Office (<https://beta.juneau.org/clerk/elections>) are as follows:

Sept. 3 — Voter registration deadline

How to register: A voter must have an address within the City and Borough of Juneau, be a U.S. citizen and be 18 or older (or 18 within 90 days after the election). If your name or address has changed since the previous election, you must update your voter information. You'll need your current Alaska driver's license or state ID.

You can register online at www.elections.alaska.gov or at any of these locations: State Division of Elections' Office, 240 Main Street, Room 601; State Division of Elections — Region 1 Office, Mendenhall Mall; Municipal Building, 155 S. Seward St., Clerks Office Room 202; any CBJ library.

Sept. 18 — Ballots available for absentee voting, absentee voting stations open

Applications for voting absentee are already open, and those interested can find the application on the Clerks website or at the Clerks office at City Hall.

Starting Sept. 18, the ballots themselves will be available at City Hall and at the Mendenhall Mall Annex (by the State Division of Elections).

Sept. 26 — Last day to receive applications for absentee by mail in Clerks office

Sept. 28 — Last day to file write-in candidacy letter of intent

Oct. 2 — Last day to submit application for fax ballot (5 p.m.)

Oct. 3 — Election Day. Polls open from 7 a.m.-8 p.m.

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of Anchorage.

“I don’t remember every word (of the card), but he was trying to tell me I should have a large vision — that I should expand my horizons,” Sebcioglu said.

The Turkish native laughed to think that, all these years later, he ended up living in Ket-chikan.

As Sebcioglu explains it, he came to Alaska as so many do, on a cruise ship. He was working on the ship and met the woman who became his wife while she was working for a tour operator.

Sebcioglu has been living in Alaska since 2004. On Friday, he became a U.S. citizen, one of more than 30 immigrants taking their oaths in the Robert Boochever Courthouse in Juneau.

The federal courtroom was packed for the naturalization ceremony, which was presided over by Judge Scott A. Oravec, current Magistrate Judge for the U.S. District Court in Fairbanks.

The majority of those becoming Americans at the Juneau ceremony were from the Philippines, with the remainder coming from countries as diverse as Nigeria, Chile, Australia, Tonga and the Ukraine.

“I share with you the pursuit of the American dream,” Oravec told the crowd, noting that immigration authorities changed the name of his Hungarian great-grandfather when he arrived at Ellis Island.

“Today is finally here,” he added. “To get here, you faced adversity and you overcame adversity. ... I ask you to stay true to those values.”

As each new citizen received their certificate of naturalization and shook Oravec's hand, they told the family members and friends assembled where they came from and added a few words, most saying simply that they were proud and happy.

“I felt American (in my) heart, and now it's official,” said Bereniz Montoya-Pezo, of Peru.

Montoya-Pezo said she came to Alaska initially six years ago on a nonimmigrant visa, and then went through the process to obtain an immigrant visa and begin the journey to become a citizen.

In order to apply to become a U.S. citizen, you must be at least 18 and must have been a permanent resident for the past three or five years (depending on the provision of law under which you are eligible to naturalize). You must also be able to read, write, and speak basic English and demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of U.S. history and government, as well as demonstrate good moral character and loyalty to the principles of the U.S. Constitution.

During an interview with an immigration services officer, you must take and pass English and civics tests; a practice civics test you can take online poses questions that range from Civil War facts to constitutional knowledge.

Montoya-Pezo said she didn't find the test that difficult, explaining, “I have three kids who are learning that in school, so I was learning that with them.”

Julie Lekwauwa wiped tears from her eyes as her Nigerian-born husband, Chima, received his certificate.

“I'm very grateful to be here,” he said. “Today, a new story will be added to this great country. Truly, this goes into history — (this date) will never be removed.”

Julie said it has been a 10-year journey for the couple, which started when Chima left Nigeria for Benin. Initially, she said, they tried to get him a visitor visa; she then went to visit him in Benin and eventually succeeded in obtaining a fiance visa, which took two years.

The naturalization process, Julie said, was exhausting and expensive.

Was it worth it?

Chima just smiled, as Julie exclaimed, “Yes! It's been a long struggle, but we're glad.”

• Contact reporter Liz Kellar at 523-2246 or liz.kellar@juneauempire.com.

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same thing.”

Wielechowski, ki, Halford and Tillion contended that when the Alaska Permanent Fund (and subsequently, the dividend program) were created, they bypassed the Alaska Constitution's prohibition against dedicated funds.

Wielechowski delivered the oral arguments in superior court and at the Supreme Court.

“The answer is no — the 1976 amendment did not exempt the Legislature's use of Permanent Fund income from the Constitution's anti-dedication clause,” the court stated in its decision. “The Legislature's use of Permanent Fund income is subject to normal appropriation and veto budgetary processes.”

The Alaska Supreme Court also rejected an argument that Walker exercised his veto technically incorrect.

Assistant Attorney General Kathryn Vogel delivered the state's argument to the high court.

“I think that there's a recognition here that this was a really important legal issue which needed to be clearly understood, and that's what this court did,” she said by phone.

The Alaska Legislature is currently considering multiple options for using a portion of the earnings of the Permanent Fund to balance a multibillion-dollar budget deficit. While Friday's decision was ostensibly about the 2016 veto, it has huge implications for that ongoing debate.

The Alaska Supreme Court ruling means that legislators have a free hand to adjust the annual amount of the dividend if they divert a portion of the Permanent Fund's earnings to cover government expenses.

“In that sense, it affirms the state's position on what was legally al-

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of their lives in Juneau. Dayton was born in St. Louis but moved to Alaska's capital when she was 2.

Waterhouse was born and raised here. He was sent out of state when he was younger for getting in legal trouble due to drug use. He enlisted and spent almost two years in Afghanistan. But every time he left the state, it wasn't for long.

“Of course I found my way back,” Waterhouse said. “Everybody does. It's

Juneau.”

For both of them, being back in Juneau meant continuing to use.

“I think it's just the epidemic in this town,” Dayton said, laughing humorlessly. “A lot of peers do it, so starting at a young age, it just becomes your lifestyle.”

Though it's not on the road system, Juneau has been unable to avoid the spread of the nationwide opioid epidemic. In 2015, there were 112 emergency room visits in Alaska due to heroin overdoses, and 10 of them were in Juneau, according to Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. In the same year, 5 percent of the state's prescription

Thank you

The Juneau Community Garden Association's 25th Annual Harvest Fair was a grand success, thanks to the generosity of time, talent and treasures from so many friends of the garden. We are grateful to Holy Trinity Episcopal Church for use of their kitchen and the Juneau Gun Club and the AK Fish and Game Hunter Ed Complex for the use of their parking lots. Thanks to Super Bear IGA for the generous donation of hot dogs and buns and to AmeriGas for the tank of propane so we could cook the hot dogs! Thanks also to KTOO and KINY for air time on the radio.

Produce and flowers were exhibited at the fair and ribbons awarded by the team of expert judges: Ed Buyarski, Jenny Fremlin, Douglas Community Gardens, Peter Froehlich, Sarah Lewis and Darren Snyder, UAF Extension Service, Joe Orsi, Terry Toon, Sylvia Geraghty, and Danielle Brown-Farrell. Well done, folks.

Gratitude is also extended to the talented guest musicians, Gerry Fiscus, Dale Wygant, Don Rudolph and Henry Hopkins who provided a festive atmosphere for our gathering.

The Farmers' Market, food sales and exhibit of produce and flowers are made possible through the efforts of JCGA members who contribute produce and baked goods for purchase, and work to make sure it all runs smoothly, including parking, set up and clean-up. Thanks to all for your dedication to our garden.

Despite the Southeast weather, Juneau gardeners love to play in the dirt and then celebrate with each other as we share the fruits of our labors. Thanks to everyone who made the celebration a wonderful success!

Pat McLeary
JCGA Board Secretary

lowed,” Vogel said.

Friday's decision formally upholds a November superior court ruling from Judge William Morse, who said at the time that he expected the issue to ultimately be decided by the Supreme Court.

“I think this will send shockwaves all across the state. I think people are very angry about the cuts to the dividend, and this has the potential to really galvanize them,” Wielechowski said.

He said the repercussions may be felt in the Legislature and in next year's general elections.

Wielechowski has been rumored as a Democratic candidate for governor, but on Friday when asked whether he will run, he said, “I haven't made any decision at this point.”

For the past several years, Wielechowski has offered a constitutional amendment in the Legislature to enshrine dividend payments in the Alaska Constitution.

This year's attempt,

Senate Joint Resolution 1, has passed the Senate State Affairs Committee but is stuck in the Senate Judiciary committee, which is chaired by Sen. John Coghill, R-North Pole and an opponent of the idea.

Coghill was the sole “do not pass” vote on the resolution in the state affairs committee.

By phone from the Interior, he said he's “no great fan of putting a constitutional right to a dividend in our constitution.”

“The way he wrote that,” Coghill said of Wielechowski's amendment, “it would look like a constitutional right equal to free speech.”

In effect, SJR 1 would grant Alaskans a constitutional right to money from the government.

Wielechowski, for his part, said Friday's ruling may kick-start the discussion on the constitutionality of the dividend.

“I think this is really going to start that discussion a little more earnestly,” Wielechowski said.

opioid emergency room visits were in Juneau.

Dayton and Waterhouse have been close friends since middle school before becoming a couple last year, and it became clear over the years that to get sober, they'd need to cut themselves off from the others.

Dayton said she's tried to quit a few times, and learned something from each time she did. One of the biggest lessons, she said, was that “you literally can't talk to anybody you were once using with.”

Different than treatment

Both had tried different treatment methods and had tried to quit multiple times, getting discouraged and “jaded,” as they said it, toward the idea of treatment.

As Dayton and Waterhouse struggled to get clean, a group of doctors at Bartlett Regional Hospital were working to bring a new treatment approach to Juneau. The treatment method, known as Medication Assisted Treatment, had been used in a few places throughout the country with great success.

The approach uses a drug called Suboxone to help balance brain chemistry to clear the mind. This allows recovering addicts to focus on the task at

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hand, whether it's applying for jobs, interacting with family or going to counseling sessions at Rainforest Recovery Center. The treatment allows addicts to go through recovery program without being admitted to an inpatient facility.

The hospital received a grant in December 2016 to start the program, which ended up getting off the ground in April of this year.

Word of the new treatment method reached Dayton and Waterhouse, and they jumped at the opportunity. Dayton was immediately accepted into the program, while Waterhouse had to wait a couple weeks before he was accepted.

Almost immediately, they began making progress. Waterhouse said the Suboxone was even more effective than he thought it would be.

"There's a million and one excuses not to take it," Waterhouse said, "but as soon as we started taking it, that was the 'ah' moment for me, realizing how much it was helping. Like, I felt normal again."

There were days when cravings were bad, and days when one of them wouldn't feel great, but they've made it through since joining the program earlier this summer. Both said that they feel less tempted to relapse now than they have in past recovery attempts.

The only critique Wa-



MICHAEL PENN | JUNEAU EMPIRE

Nick Waterhouse and girlfriend Meagan Dayton have used the outpatient program at Rainforest Recovery Center to kick their opioid habit. They posed at the center on Wednesday.

terhouse had about the program is that it took a couple weeks to get in. Both he and Dayton said it's vital that when an addict is ready to seek treatment that the addict gets into treatment as soon as possible. Otherwise, the desire to get clean might pass.

Medical Director of Behavioral Health Jenna Hiestand said the program is getting better at this.

"Whenever you start a new program, you're kind of working out the kinks and trying to figure out what's necessary and what isn't necessary with regulations and what paperwork and what forms need to be done," Hiestand said.

"As time has gone on, we've been trying to remove unnecessary hurdles."

They've eliminated requirements and steps to getting into the program, Hiestand said, such as a patient having a primary care physician prior to starting the program.

Hiestand said that more and more people are joining the program, as she's written almost 100 prescriptions for the treatment since April. Not every treatment will work for every patient, and some have struggled with the program, but there are success stories such as Dayton and Waterhouse.

If people are seeking

help, Hiestand said, getting started in the program is as easy as calling 796-8690 and in some cases she can meet with prospective patients the very same day.

Hiestand said patients start off by meeting with a doctor once a week, and then as the program goes along the meetings spread out a little. Dayton and Waterhouse said their meetings are about once every two or three weeks at the moment. They're still in the program and continuing to take Suboxone every morning.

Life began to get a little easier for Dayton and Waterhouse after entering the program. Instead

of getting turned down for jobs, Waterhouse got multiple offers. They both want to tell others struggling with addiction that if they're ready to seek treatment, this program works.

"I've always been iffy about treatment," Dayton said. "I've always felt like, if you wanna quit, it's gonna happen because you want to. I've never really believed in treatment, but this program's completely different to me than 'treatment,' I guess."

The one reason

Dayton and Waterhouse were telling their story in the parking lot at Rainforest Recovery Center on Wednesday after-

noon, speaking during a rare half hour when the rain wasn't falling.

Wearing a white fleece jacket, Dayton held a heavily-decorated car seat by its handle. In it, Brooklynn slept calmly, wrapped in a blanket. As if staying sober weren't incentive enough, Dayton acknowledged that she has an even bigger motivator to stay clean now.

"I think it's different for each person," Dayton said. "You find that one reason to get sober and I found my one reason."

Dayton said she's hit rock bottom a number of times, but now she's at the opposite end of the spectrum. Waterhouse, even after serving two years in Afghanistan, said he's prouder of himself than he's ever been.

To cap it all off, Brooklynn's healthy and happy. Taking Suboxone every morning helps them go about their day with a clearer mind, but they have another source of motivation every morning.

"It's nice to find happiness not revolved around something," Dayton said. "Before, it was like, you were happy when you had drugs in your hand and you were feeling OK, and happiness came after that. Now it's like, the simplest little thing of waking up and ..."

"Her smiling," Waterhouse said, looking down at Brooklynn.

"...seeing your baby and her smiling," Dayton finished, "or being in a really good relationship. Little things make you happy again that didn't before."

• Contact reporter Alex McCarthy at alex.mccarthy@juneauempire.com.

GOVERNOR WALKER: It's time to get on board.

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